

81ST MEDICAL GROUP

The 81st Medical Group operates one of the largest Air Force medical facilities in the Air Force. Its primary mission is to maintain medical readiness for worldwide contingencies by providing quality, cost-effective health care for more than 27,000 enrollees, including more than 8,200 active-duty members. In addition, the 81st MDG commander oversees the Gulf Coast Multi-Service Market, comprised of five DOD medical facilities and all DOD beneficiaries – more than 80,000 – from Mobile, Ala. to New Orleans.

The 81st Medical Group provides the most comprehensive array and quality of services available in the Gulf Coast area. TRICARE Prime is the DOD's premier program for delivering comprehensive health care. The Keesler Hospital is clearly the best place to enroll for most health-care situations.

The 81st MDG has the fourth largest deployment platform in the Air Force Medical Service and second in AETC. On average, Keesler deploys almost 200 personnel annually in support of contingencies around the world as well as medical-deployment-for-training (humanitarian) missions. The Keesler Hospital is also one of three Air Force medical facilities designated to support the National Disaster Medical System as a Federal Coordinating Center.

The hospital offers almost 60 services and education programs with a staff of more than 1,700 military and civilian members and partnerships with TRICARE, the University of Mississippi Medical Center, the VA Gulf Coast Veterans Health Care System medical center and Gulfport Memorial Hospital. The hospital has seven newly-renovated surgery suites and a myriad of improvements throughout the ground floor including flood barriers on external doors and a re-alignment of high-dollar assets to floors above the basement level. Construction of a new \$50+ million inpatient tower, begun in late 2009, was completed in late 2011. A new \$10 million Radiation Oncology Center was completed in October 2009 and began treating patients in March 2010.

The hospital has 66 training affiliations with 35 different institutions/organizations to train medical physicians, technicians and nurses. The General Surgery residency program is integrated with the Naval Hospital Pensacola, Fla., and the 96th Medical Group at Eglin AFB, Fla., and has a long-standing integration program with the Biloxi VA.

The 81st MDG and the Biloxi VA Gulf Coast Veterans Health Care System are officially designated a DoD/VA Joint Venture. Known as "Centers of Excellence," the partnership enhances health care for federal beneficiaries along the central Gulf Coast by sharing appointments, and sometimes building capacity together.

The Keesler hospital offers a state-of-the art Family Birthing Center. The unit offers large, airy rooms where women spend their entire stay throughout the delivery experience. They are light-filled, decorated with pastel colors and have wood floors. The medical equipment in the rooms is state-of-the art. Each has a TV and DVD player. Most important to mothers, the birthing center rooms have private bathrooms and each room has its own coastal theme. Babies stay with their mothers most of the time. In addition to the delivery rooms, there are also antepartum rooms for expectant mothers who experience medical problems early in their pregnancies, and two operating rooms for Caesarian deliveries.

The hospital's Diagnostic Imaging Department boasts state-of-the-art equipment, including the only 3-Tesla MRI system on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. In addition, the Keesler Warfighter Refractive Surgery Center is the Air Force's flagship for laser eye surgery in the Southeast.

The Keesler hospital also is a teaching facility with medical, surgical residencies and physician assistant training. In addition, the 81st MDG provides training to dental residents in Advanced

Education in General Dentistry and Endodontics. Eight enlisted phase II training programs are also offered.

The 81st MDG is one of seven Air Force medical facilities with formal clinical investigation programs specifically designated to facilitate clinical-based research and training that meets the needs of DOD medical readiness, force protection, clinical medicine, graduate medical education and homeland defense. The hospital's Institutional Review Board and Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee currently oversee 88 research and training protocols. Training areas include neonatal intubation, emergency procedures for non-physicians, Special Operations damage control surgery and suturing techniques for dental officers.

Furthermore, the medical group operates the only medical genetics center in the DOD. The USAF Medical Genetics Center provides laboratory and consultative support to military medical facilities around the world. Laboratory capabilities include chromosome, gene and DNA testing. Currently the laboratory performs 25,000 tests annually, a number that is growing rapidly.

(Current as of October 2012)